3: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mitchelab

a mat or a cloth, supported in a reclining position with pillows and cloths, or on a covered box standing about a foot from the ground, with her legs drawn up. No fire is built in the house, all doors and windows are tightly shut, and covers are provided against a chill. A candle stands lighted at the threshold, and holy water is poured beside it; a candle is also often lighted in the church before the statue of the saint who corresponds to the *vodun* deity under whose protection the woman in labor is thought to be. In the room with her is the midwife and as many as six, seven, eight, or nine older women belonging to the families of the woman and her husband. The hands of the woman are made to rest on her knees, but where labor is prolonged, her arms are supported above her head to afford relief. She is three times given very hot tea or a drink made of the stewed leaves of the mango tree and of the *bois lait*. The midwife, with palm oil on her hands, watches the rhythm of labor and presses on the abdomen to facilitate delivery.

If it becomes evident that this will be difficult, a *vodun* priest is at once called to determine by divination whether or not the deities who have been propitiated are satisfied. If the answer is a negative one, he promises future sacrifices or gives minor offerings immediately. Care is also taken to ascertain whether the trouble is due to the discontent of the family dead who may have been angered by neglect to wear mourning for them, or because sacrifices or a *service* due them have been delayed too long. Inquiries are similarly made to determine whether the spirits of twins might not be displeased, while the possibility that evil magic may have been invoked is not overlooked, especially if the husband has several wives. If the inquiry shows that the magic of a co-wife was responsible, a strong counter-charm is made at once. Should the woman in labor eventually die, however, her death is not considered to be the result of any act of infidelity on her part, and does not, as in other Negro cultures, prevent the usual burial and mourning customs being carried out.

3: Herskovits E-4,5 (1936) 1937 HV3 Haiti HV3 Herskovits

may perhaps be said to have come to this: Adherents of the African cults refrain from killing the snake, and should they do so by accident, the African custom of giving ceremonial burial to any creature having supernatural importance is followed as an atonement. Where this is eminent, difficulties of so serious a nature are felt to threaten that to prevent them a priest of the cult is called upon to offer up a sacrifice and to beg forgiveness even after the little ceremony of burial has been performed.[9]

Inasmuch as *vodun* flourishes in Mirebalais despite the minor rôle of serpent-worship, it is evident that in seeking to understand its nature and its philosophy other aspects must be considered. Two historical facts must be kept constantly in mind in making this analysis, for without them, what follows would be meaningless. The first is that *vodun* derives from a background of African theology and ceremonialism. The second is that the Negroes have continuously been subjected to the influence of Catholicism during the centuries that have passed since their introduction into the island.

Yet another point may prove suggestive in providing a useful point of view for an analysis of the *vodun* cult. This bears upon a difficulty impossible and happily unnecessary to resolve in the field study of religion, which arises out of the degree of variation in answers to questions dealing with the same point. These answers differ not only according to the status of the individual in the cult, since layman and priest have understandably different concepts of the functions of deities based on unequal degrees of expert knowledge, but the extent to which an individual has religious interests or is indifferent to them influences the nature of his responses. A fundamental fallacy results from the fact that except where there is an officially sanctioned theology — which makes for dogma, and edicts for performance worship, in contrast with the living dynamic nature of Haitian peasant belief and ritual — there are no "real" answers to questions in the field of religion. The

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

764 placed in the coffin, which must always be used for burial. Even if a person is poor, "he can always borrow a plank from a neighbor, for people are charitable in matters of death," or, if a family cannot immediately afford to have carpenters make the coffin, they are paid later, a few gourdes at a time. This [567] also holds for the professional bather of corpses, who receives three to five gourdes in the countryside, fifteen gourdes in Mirebalais, and, it is said, perhaps fifty in Port-au-Prince. A pig or a goat is killed to feed those who dig the grave and carry the coffin, "so they can do their work well." Otherwise these men receive no payment, for "people do such things for each other."

The wake,* which takes place on the night of death, is one of the most important ceremonies in the cycle of rites for the dead. Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young chil- [764 851] dren if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. During the wake the body lies in the second room of the house, the long white candle used at the deceased's first communion standing lighted at his feet. If the dead was not a communicant, newly bought candles are placed at his head and feet. The wife and children either stay with the corpse or are near by with friends. The one who bathed the corpse remains constantly at its side as the members of the family come and go, since the body must never remain alone. Wailing goes on all night, and as more relatives arrive, those already there echo their cries.

On a table in another room a white cloth is spread, and a crucifix, images of the saints, flowers, lighted candles, and a lump of oil are placed on it. The singers bring their song- [533] books, since the canticles of the Church are almost the only songs heard. At times songs are specially composed for the occasion, but these always concern themselves with death. Those who stand before the table, principally women, lead 070 the singing, the others acting as a chorus. People come and go

1: Herskovits E-4,5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Mirebalais

tainer to a crossroad, where it is deposited as an offering for Legba, and its contents are eaten by the dogs, who significantly, in Dahomey are the animals sacred to this deity. Following this, the adults enter the closed room, to feast at the laden table.

Several days after the funeral two gourdes are paid a priest — "a real one," not a *prêt' savanne* — to chant a *libera* at the grave, a rite that must be repeated each year on All Saints' Day. Each year, also, food is given the dead, though "not so much as following a funeral." Chickens, beans, rice, and coffee are the principal part of such an offering, for which no priest need be called, as the ceremony is merely to let the dead know that they are not forgotten. Every three or five years, however, a large *mangé* must be given for all the family dead, and if held on the family habitation, there is social dancing, where such favorites of the ancestors as the *martinique*, the *banda*, the *calebasse*, and the *zesse* are danced.[9]

Differences in procedure mark various modes of death. When a person is killed by lightning, a justice of the peace must be called and the burial is performed at once. Such a one has no "last prayer," because, death by lightning being a punishment of God, it is felt that the dead probably made an oath which he subsequently violated. Those killed by lightning or who die of smallpox are not mourned, but no explanation could be obtained for this obvious survival of African custom. If a leper has concealed his disease, mourning is worn for him, though if the cause of death is generally known this is forgone. There is customarily no mourning for suicides, and never where the regulations of the Church are rigorously applied.

If the dead person was a *vodun* priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps are taken before his death to "remove the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause their family much harm

1: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3 Mirebalais

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if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar. The *hungan* who performs the rite of removing these *loa* is preferably himself a member of the family and is usually left alone with one or two assistants and an elderly relative of the dead, but if the family includes no *hungan*, the one who is called, even though greatly trusted, is most carefully watched, because a strange priest might take for himself the valued gods of the dead, leaving only the weak ones. The *hungan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, with which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.

766 [764] [785]

No special purification is needed for a house where death has occurred except when the deceased was tubercular or a leper, when everything except his money is buried or thrown in some unfrequented place. The body of one who has died of smallpox, though washed, is buried as soon after death as possible without being enclosed in a coffin. Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard, the lepers and victims of smallpox being separated from the others, for the Church declares these have died of the plague. One who drowns is buried at the riverside where his body is recovered, though if the corpse is not too badly decomposed, the authorities give permission, and the family of the dead can afford the expense of transportation, the body may be brought home. Children are buried in the cemetery, but, on the principle that "the young must serve their elders," the funeral of a child is attended only by those relations who are younger than the dead; for in Haiti, as in Africa, it is not held seemly that the young should be followed to the grave by their elders. At the house, however,

[561] [791]

J: Herskovits E-4, 5 (1934) 1937 SV3 Haiti SV3
Miscellaneous

older relatives participate in the rites as at any death; moreover, the rule *gran' moun pas sui' 'ti moun* holds only where a father, mother, grandparent, or older sister or brother is concerned.[9]

Unless the dead was known to be a sorcerer his house is not abandoned. If, unlike most of his kind, a reputed sorcerer is survived by children, they continue to live in his house, and though no gesture of marked social disapprobation is made, few persons attend the funeral and fewer still put foot inside the house afterwards, which means there is little of the habitual calling on the survivors. An abandoned house of this type is called *caille yun moun lou' gawou* — the house of a werewolf. If a stranger were to buy such a house, he would first have to "restrain" the evil spirits who continued there. Generally, however, a man will not buy land unless a diviner ascertains that no evil beings have ever been associated with it.

Such, in outline, are the principal rites for the dead and the outer manifestations of the sanctions which validate the cult for its followers. Fundamentally, these derive from the power which the dead wield in the world of the living — power that is held to come directly from God, who has not only given the dead all the rights of the living, but also the right to return to earth as ghosts. There are several types of dead, two of these being the *vien-viens* and the *zombi*. The *vien-viens* are ordinary ghosts; the latter, who will be discussed in the next chapter, are those whose souls have been "sold" by sorcerers and are therefore doomed to wander the earth until their destined time arrives to return to God. Still another type of dead are the ghosts of children who die before baptism, called *lutins*, who ride young horses, so that when a wild colt with a tangled mane is seen, it is said that a *lutin* has been on his back. The souls of the dead are held first to go to God in the sky, where they are condemned to purgatory or hell or permitted to remain in paradise; "It is God who creates, therefore when someone dies, he returns to Him." And as for the effect of pur-

2: Caribbean 9-6 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

with the corpse. He wants nothing to do with the domain of the Gédé. He liberates himself from the corpse at the cemetery and retires "below the water." He is no longer a friend and benefactor of the family. He cannot be inherited by the children of the deceased. Such controls as the deceased once exercised over him are disputed. He may, in fact, be angered at the treatment he has received and return only to harass the family. Thus, if a family fails to have the mait' tête of one of its members properly removed at death, it may be persecuted afterward by the "spirit" of the dead ancestor and the loa as well.

The rite of dispossessing a deceased person of his loa is called *dévonnin*, or *dévonné*. The essence of it is the transference of the mait' tête from the head of the dead person into a special receptacle, an earthen jar called a *govi* or *pot tête*. Sometimes it is transferred to the head of a child in the family, though usually this comes later.

There have been many descriptions of this ritual, and they seem to show that, though the tradition is a constant one, the specific patterns of the services are variable. Different regions, different cult centers, and different houngans conduct the rites in different ways.

Eugene Aubin wrote, for example:

> On the day of death, the deceased is placed standing up; the *papaloi* [houngan] conducts the rites which retire the *mystère* [loa] from the body and introduce it into a jar, which is then carefully sealed. On the ninth day, after the feast for the dead, the jar is broken and liberty given to the *loa*.[a]

Melville Herskovits reported:

> If the dead person was a Vodun priest or otherwise had strong *connaissance*, steps are taken . . . "to remove the *loa* from his head" so that his soul will not go under the water, for, as has been explained, such souls are held to be powerful spirits which may cause the family much harm if, after a time, an expensive and troublesome ceremony is not performed to bring them out and lodge them in a jar. . . . The *houngan* stands in place and calls the name of the dead. He puts some of the hair of the dead in the jar or in a calabash, into which the *loa* is supposed to go, and, unless another member of the family, nominated to receive the *connaissance* of the dead, is present, the jar or calabash is sealed until these spirits can be "given" to a successor.[b]

As Herskovits understands it, it is the "soul" of the dead person that would go to live "under the water," rather than the loa. This would appear to be a fusion of two separate elements—the wandering, troublesome "spirit" of a dead person and the mait' tête who retires "under the water." Actually, Haitians are not always consistent in their explanations of what happens, or of the difference between loa and souls. On the hounfor altar there may be some govis that contain "souls" or "spirits" and others that contain loa; though the distinction is readily appreciated, Haitians are

[a] [Translated from the French of Aubin, En Haïti, P. 212 Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

[b] [Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, PP. 213-214 Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

sometimes hard put to explain the similarity of treatment of these two categories.

Another investigator, Alfred Métraux, has provided a vivid description given by a Haitian of a ceremony of removing the loa. In this instance the corpse was not placed in an upright position as described by Aubin but was laid on a specially prepared bed. Attending the body were the houngan, his hounsi, and a child of the dead man who was to receive the liberated loa.

> The child . . . grasps in his hand a black-and-white or a white cock. On the ground in front of the bed they arrange a fine white napkin. On top of it there are syrup, candles . . . , rafia, and other things. After they have finished sprinkling water, clapping their hands, singing to the *loa*, they all go around the bed of the dead person. The child, with the cock in his hand, makes the rounds with the *houngan*. They wave the rooster, they wave it back and forth two, three, four, five, six times over the dead person's head. During this time all those present get possessed by the *loa*, sing, clap their hands. The dead person's bed begins to creak. The *houngan* climbs on the bed and grabs the dead person's two arms. . . . He pulls him to a sitting position. The child (into whose head the *loa* is to be transferred) strikes the chicken three times on the head of the dead person. He lets go the chicken, and the chicken flies up and starts to run all around the room, smashing pots and vessels. They grab the chicken and let it go in the air three times, shouting: *Ki kote loa li!* Immediately the *loa* goes into the head of the dead person's child.[1]

The houngan cited by Métraux is described as pulling the corpse to a sitting position, but more commonly it is believed that the houngan has the power to make the body sit up by itself. A man from Jérémie explained it this way:

"The body is laid out on a mat. The houngan shakes his asson over the dead man, and talks to the loa in the head. He calls the loa's name: 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Changogolo!' He calls, calls, calls. He doesn't call the dead man's name, he calls the mait' tête. 'Changogolo! Changogolo! Get up! Wake up! Sit up!' The corpse sits up. It even talks. Then the houngan says, 'Lie down!' And the corpse lies down. But it is not the dead man who sits up. The dead man is dead. It is the mait' tête who has forced the body to sit up. After this the houngan takes the loa from the head and puts it in a pot tête. Then the body can be buried. And afterward the loa can be put in the head of someone else or freed. Or the houngan may keep the loa in the pot tête and sell it to someone who needs a loa to work for him. If they buried the corpse without a *désounin*, the loa would resent it and go away below the water."

George Eaton Simpson has written an excellent description of a ceremony for removal of the loa from the head of a deceased houngan.[2] The

[1] [Hall and others, Haitian Creole, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 64, pp. 188-189. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

[2] [Simpson, "Four Vodun Ceremonies," Journal of American Folklore, April-June, 1946, pp. 155-162. Cf. p. 350, Cat. 116.--Analyst]

2: Courlander B-4 (1939-1950) 1960 972.9 Haiti 972

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rites took place in the region of Plaisance in northern Haiti. Such a ceremony, Simpson notes, may be attended by several houngans other than the Vodoun priest who is officially in charge. They "share the obligation and pleasure of conducting this service for their colleague, their former rival, and perhaps their former enemy." In a room of the deceased houngan's house is the body, attended by the family, relatives, close friends, and the officiating houngan and his assistants.

. . . Near the body, which is covered by a sheet, are placed a jug and a new canari (a large earthen jar). The officiating houngan makes the sign of the cross, mumbles a few ritual formulas, and taking a spoon puts some "manger les morts" (special food for the dead) in the canari: plantains, yams, bonbins, taïcoats, sweet potatoes, corn meal, roasted corn, bread, cakes, rice, millet, meat, chicken, pistachio, chopped coconut, and other kinds of food. He then adds some water and stirs this mixture. . . . The other houngans perform the same rite. The family, friends, and others in the room imitate the acts of the houngans with the green branches which they hold in their hands. In a grave voice and with solemn gestures the officiant then appeals to the dead with songs and prayers. He invites them to come to the aid of their faithful servant, to protect him in the other world as they have protected him in this world. Following the songs and prayers the leader pronounces these words:

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"Innocent! A good man has left us!
The mother of the children weeps.
Weep, comrade yourselves.
Bon Accaben, he was here.
He died.
Master Pierre Jean-Baptiste, he was here.
He died.
General Baptiste, he was here.
He died.
Marius who was left,
He died.
But Brother Joseph survives,
We will cry, we will console ourselves."[9]

The weeping and the cries redouble, but the *pite-savane* [pitè' savann] and the houngan carry on. In the other room the *pite-savane* solemnly intones:

"I have only one soul
Which must be saved.
By the eternal flame,
I must preserve it."[10]

The officiating houngan speaks directly to the dead man: "Bon Marius, here is a canari that your heirs have especially prepared for you so that in the future you will not have any trouble and demand other sacrifices of them. You others, the dead, are always unreasonable. Because you have peace you forget that the times are hard and that on this earth we unfortunate men are crushed by suffering. Leave your family in peace after this service, Bon Marius. Do not torment them, and do not send illnesses to their children or misery to their older people. You were always a good

9 A [As translated by Courlander from Simpson's Creole text, ibid., p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

10 A [Translated by Courlander from the Creole of Simpson's text. Cf. p. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-5 (1937-1963) 1960 8V3 Ha81 8V3

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father when you were living. Continue to protect your family after death. If you need other services give abundantly to your heirs in order to obtain satisfaction. Oh, good father, good servant, good parent, good friend! Good-bye! Do not forget us as we shall not forget you."[11A]

Then the houngan goes to the canarie, strikes it three times with a piece of palm bark, and chants an invocation to the loa and to God, while members of the family dance where they stand, shaking the green branches they hold. There follows an invocation to twins. After a number of loa have "entered" the service, as manifested by possessions, the houngan undertakes to find out how death came to the deceased man. An assistant brings the sacred divining shells[12A] of the dead man, and the officiating houngan throws them on the floor, pours tafia three times, and lights a candle. The shells are then consulted. Three times he goes through the procedure of casting the shells and consulting them. Later he announces that "the death of Bon Marius is not the death of an ordinary man, that he is now resting in La Ville-au-Camp (capital of the loas which is 'under the water'), and that the loas will continue to protect his descendants provided that they show themselves worthy of protection."[13A] There is more singing and ritual, and then the canarie is covered. The loa from the head of Marius has found a temporary resting place. A little later in the service "the houngan raises the canari as high as possible, almost as high as his face, as he repeats the last line: 'Where may I find refuge?' With a quick movement the canari is shattered. The food is scattered, the loas are satisfied, and the crowd breaks into disorderly flight. . . ."[14A] A few hours later the body of the deceased is buried.

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It is obvious that these rituals vary a good deal according to regional practices and according to the importance of the persons for whom they are conducted. Furthermore, there is a good deal of difference of opinion among Haitians as to what actually takes place when the mak' tête is taken from the head of the deceased man.

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Although the prêt' savane (bush priest) is subsidiary to the houngan at death rites, his is nevertheless a conspicuous presence. He may begin the services with prayers for the dead, in which the family joins, while the houngan remains in the background. Later, the houngan takes over. In certain regions, however, the prêt' savane is dispensed with altogether, his function being absorbed by the houngan.

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As reported by Herskovits, the wake for the dead is one of the most important ceremonies in the death rites. He says:

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Wakes are held for all dead, even for very young children if they have been baptized, though if a baby dies before baptism, it is buried without ceremony in a little box in the courtyard of the habitation. . . . The wife and the children either stay

11A [This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, Op. Cit., P. 156. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]
12A [For footnote, see Category 116, P. 350. --Analyst]
13A [Simpson, Op. Cit. P. 159. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]
14A [Ibid., P. 161. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. --Analyst]

invoked the loa, the pallbearers brought the body forward as though to go straight ahead, but then they began to lurch and sway as though an invisible force were pushing them around. They veered as though to take the right turn, and again they lurched and staggered. At last they turned toward the left, and in this direction they found the road clear. The houngan thanked the Master of the Crossroads, the widow took her place at the head of the procession, and it proceeded on its way to the cemetery.

In the services for a dead houngan described by Simpson, the body is placed in a coffin, which is carried to all the places sacred to the loa of the houmfor before being taken to the cemetery. First it is taken to the sacred trees where the loa reside, then to the sacred spring "whose waters have cured many sicknesses which physicians had pronounced incurable . . . The bearers of the coffin circle the spring several times. The coffin is swung [toward] each of the four cardinal points." Afterward the procession continues its way to the burial ground.[12]

But the treatment given to the dead may vary according to the manner in which they died. Leyburn notes, for example, that "a person struck by lightning . . . would have no ceremonies at all, for lightning is an act of God."[13] It may well be that the Haitian rationale for not holding ceremonies for an individual killed by lightning is that God has already held the final ceremony. But in the Haitian mind all deaths are, in the last analysis, acts of God, even though magic, poison, or accident may have played an immediate part. Why, then, should the corpse struck by lightning be treated so differently? The answer would appear to lie in a custom of the Yoruba of dispensing with all burial rites for persons killed by lightning, such persons being considered enemies of the lightning deity Chango. In Dahomey, Herskovits reports, the same attitude pervails in regard to persons killed by lightning:

> If a person is killed by lightning he . . . stands convicted by this fact of some grave crime which has incurred the displeasure of the god of the Thunder Pantheon (Xevioso). A person so killed is never buried by his family, but the body is turned over to the chief priest and cult-members of these deities. It is believed that a man killed in this fashion remains upright until the chief priest questions him and forces him to confess the crimes he had committed to be so punished. No one touches any of the belongings of such a man, not even his money. The house in which he lived is allowed to go to ruin, an *enan* of palm fronds being placed around it to guard against anyone entering it. The movable property of such a man, his clothes, his stools, and his dishes, are thrown away at the crossroads . . .[14]

The burial of a Haitian who dies of smallpox likewise differs from that of one who dies a "normal" death. The victim of smallpox is buried without a coffin in a segregated part of the cemetery. The reason for this lies

12 [Simpson, Op. Cit., P. 161. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
13 [Leyburn, The Haitian People, P. 156. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]
14 [Herskovits, Dahomey, I, 398. Cf. P. 350, Category 116. -- Analyst]

B Courlander B-4 (1937-1945) 1953 BV3 HAR1 BV3

beyond the obvious fear of contagion. In his study of Dahomey, Herskovits notes:

> . . . Small-pox is believed to be sent as a punishment for grave offenses in the eyes of these [the Sagbata] deities, and it is taken to indicate that either the dead person himself or a member of his family has committed some heinous crime such as the practice of black magic. A person who dies of small-pox may only be buried after permission has been given by the chief priest of the Earth cult.[20]

Thus, in Haiti, though the connections with the past are clouded, it is clear that victims of lightning and smallpox are treated as a special class of criminals or malefactors.

Ordinary malefactors such as malevolent criminals and murderers—until recent years, at least—were not buried in the common graveyard. They, too, were segregated at the periphery of the cemetery or buried at the edge of a trail or road where the traffic would not permit them to rest and where their graves would be under constant surveillance. The roadside grave sometimes was also the fate of a person killed by lightning.

That these special burials are related to the Dahomean and Yoruban concepts of retribution for crimes against the deities is supported by the similarity of treatment accorded victims of lightning and disease and common criminals. In Haiti, Herskovits observes: "Those who die of smallpox or leprosy, suicides, or persons shot as a punishment for crime are not buried in the communal cemetery, but in special sections of the graveyard," the suicides and criminals being set apart from the others.[21]

Graves found near the seashore, lake shores, or riverbanks frequently are declared to belong to persons who died of drowning.

Approximately nine days after a person's death, the "last prayers" are said, and the soul of the deceased is presumed to have departed from the house. Once more, under the tonnelle outside there are games, storytelling, and singing. On this night, however, there is also drumming and dancing of a special kind. Usually it is the Juba, or Martinique, dance, which is believed to be specially enjoyed by the dead, and it is the older people, rather than the young, who participate. These festivities are believed to give cheer to the deceased and to "encourage" him on his way. On the next night comes the mangé mort, the feast for the family dead, a ritual which continues periodically through the years.

Sometimes in Haiti you may come upon an old tomb or grave before which a dish of specially prepared food has been set. This is part of the mangé mort ritual.

A man may make provision in advance of his death for the rites which follow his burial. He may designate special animals to be killed, leave

[20] [Ibid., pp. 397–398. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

[21] [Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, p. 214. Cf. p. 350, Category 116.--Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-4 (1237-1268) 1960 893 1681 893

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

796 Aowid Tonnerre, also pronounced Aowid Tonnerre. Another thunder loa. Aïwoid (or Aghoué) is the name of an ancient capital of Dahomey.

Bruléa. The wife of Sobo Badé.

So Nonvitor, also called Sogo Nonvitor, or simply So. A thunder loa of Dahomean origin. In Dahomey he is regarded as an offspring of Mawu and Lisa, and a member of the Sky pantheon.

[191] Kévioso, or Kévisso. A thunder loa who, like Sobo, hurls stones to the earth. In Dahomey he is known as Xevioso and is thought to be the same deity as So. In Haiti, persons killed by lightning are thought to be enemies of Kébioso and are given special treatment in burial.

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796 Aowid Wonto, known also as Cogro Nan-klon. He is a loa of the sea; thunder and
982 lightning over the ocean are thought to be Agwé showing his concern. He is usually
821 symbolized in pictures by a sailing or steam vessel. His colors are blue and white,
822 and the primary sacrificial animal for him is a male goat. High ceremonies for Agwé are begun in the lagoons and consummated in a sailing boat on the open sea, from which is launched a highly decorated and stylized miniature ship containing food for the deity. This tiny craft is known as the *Barque d'Agwé*. Hounfors honoring this spirit usually have a small boat hanging from the rafters. In Dahomey, Agwé is also a sea deity and a member of the Thunder pantheon.

[191] Aïwilèza Wonto. She is thought to be Agwé Wogo's wife, though in Dahomey
796 she was considered to be his daughter.
[191] Aowlor Wondoor. Said to be the son of Agwé.

La Sirène. Another deity of the sea, a lamenter visualized as a mermaid. La Sirène is usually thought of as belonging to a separate family, though she is frequently served along with Agwé. Some initiés do not recognize her at all.

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796 Nan-nanerétan, or Nanan Bourokoun. A loa of herbs and medicines. In Dahomey
197 this spirit was considered the grandparent of all deities, the progenitor of Mawu and Lisa from whom all demigods are descended.[1] She is still remembered in the Dahomey cults of Cuba.

Loua or Louis. Probably the Lisa of Dahomey, child of Nanbouchou.

Attibon Legba, or Legba St. One of the most important of Haitian loa, frequently the first one invoked in any service. He is the guardian of the gateway, the
[982] crossroads, and the highway. Cocks and male goats are his favorite foods, as in West Africa. In Dahomean tradition, Legba is the youngest offspring of Mawu and Lisa, the progenitors of all Dahomean deities. He is a divine trickster who is both feared
[978] and loved, a force that is capriciously malevolent or benevolent. Today, as in earlier times in Dahomey, the image of Legba, made of clay, stands or sits before the entrance to many villages. Sometimes the image is nothing more than a mound or column of earth symbolizing a phallus. Legba's mischief and tricks are directed against the other deities and human beings. In Haiti, as in Dahomey, Legba is not a personal deity. As Herskovits points out, Legba has no "character" and cannot be
[989] relied on. He is the intervener between mankind and the deities. It is in this sense that he "opens the gate," providing a channel of communication between man and loa; and it is for this reason that he is often supplicated first in religious ritual. In Dahomean lore, Legba's mischief is often in the realm of sex. In ritual dances for

[1] [Ibid., pp. 101ff. Cf. p. 354, Category 116. --Ed.]

2: Courlander 3-6 (1937-1960) 1960 572 Haiti 572

[The Vodoun Pantheon]

dressed in a black frock coat, black top hat, and black trousers or a blue, white polka-dotted shirt. He carries a cane and smokes a pipe or a cigarette, according to which manifestation of Gédé he represents. He talks with a strong nasal accent, which is acquired by anyone mounted by him. Gédé Nimbo is always asking for money. Persons possessed by him may rub hot peppers on their tongues or in their eyes. In some parts of Haiti, Gédé is thought to be identical with Baron Samedi. In a Vodoun service, no other lwa comes to center while a Gédé is present; and Gédé delights in appearing suddenly, uninvited, and obstructing the orderly progress of a ritual. Although Herskovits points out that Guédonsou, or Gédé, is a Dahomean [191] tutelary,[1] it is worth noticing that in Haiti the Gédé clan are often regarded as belonging to the Nago "nation."

Gédé Nimbo Mazoka. A Gédé brother.

Gédé Ochun. A Gédé brother.

Gédé L'Ouanga. A chamber on seven Gédé. Like the other Gédés, he is closely associated with death, and he is considered more of a misfortune than most. He is repulsive in appearance, with a dwarflike stature.

Gédé Mevlonn. A Gédé brother.

Gédé Nawon. A Gédé brother.

Gédé Nimvamm. A Gédé brother.

Gédé Vi. Said to be a son of Gédé Nimbo, though some Haitians regard this lwa as a female, possibly Gédé Nimbo's wife.

Gédé Zizilas. A lwa of lightning, thought to be responsible for death by lightning, [196] violent death in general, and destruction of cattle and other property by natural forces. He seems to be a Gédé version of Kébioso or Sobo.

Jean Zombie. One of the Gédé brothers, a "dead" spirit.

Gédé Ti Pous (Gédé Little Flea)

Gédé Rezuil (Gédé Tear Off)

Gédé Jovyeux (Happy Gédé)

Twuwa Gédé, or Gédé Twuwa Pouvoi. This Gédé is one that makes mischief as he enters a houngfor service.

Gédé Zuid (Gédé of the Island)

Gédé Yaimm

Gédé Yaneed

Cracklefeeted Gédé (The Gédé Who Mows Down)

Jeanneton Baptiste. A lwa who works with the Gédé family, one of Gédé Nimbo's graveyard assistants. He is described as having a white skin, suggesting that his surname is a corruption of "British."

Manie Gédé. A sister of the Gédé brothers.

Balaieuse. One of the Gédé brothers. His name means to "sweep and sprinkle," a ritual activity characteristic of certain Vodoun ceremonies.

Manzè Barone, or Manman Barone. The mother of the Gédé brothers.

Maît' Simbi. One of the Gédé escorts.

Baron Samedi. One of a group of Barons who cemetrik with the Gédés. They are so closely identified that some Haitians feel that Baron Samedi is merely another name for Gédé Nimbo. Persons possessed in ceremonies are thought to be mounted [187] by Baron Samedi or one of his brothers. Like the Gédés, the Barons are spoken of as "dead" spirits.

Baron Papaye. The lwa in charge of grave digging.

[1] Herskovits, Life in a Haitian Valley, p. 269, cf. p. 354, Category 116. — Analyst]

2: Courlander 8-6 (1937-1964) 1960 913 Hebi 913

916 H92

an hounfor, hounsi, houngbénicon, houngan, etc. *Houn* is of obvious French origin. *Lwa* is probably from the Fonne, but it could be from the Yoruba.

[2]Various methods and formulas are employed in "tying" a lwa. Sometimes making the sign of the cross is regarded as adequate, or the saying of a prayer. In "The Vodun Service at Mawhoun Haiti" (*American Anthropologist*, XLII, 240-253), George Eaton Simpson reports that the "tying" of a lwa sometimes results in a contest between the individual concerned and his lwangan. If the lwangan wants the *moût* ate to come in, he must overcome the ritual barriers the "lwas" has put in the way. "One procedure for bringing on possession in a servant who has tried to 'tie' his chief god is for the priest to stand in front of the person whom he suspects, make the sign of the cross, and strike him on the forehead three times with a vertebrae sword. Usually these blows are hard enough to make blood spurt. The servant then begs the pardon of the angry god, and as soon as possible he unties the knots in his handkerchief [the method he has used for 'tying' his lwa]."

GR10

[3]Herskovits, *Dahomey*.

Chapter 4: *Death Rites* (pp. 51-61)

975 I91 113

[1]Maurice Delafosse, *L'âme nègre*. Translation from *Four Frames*, special issue No. 4, French Press and Information Service, New York, June, 1958.

[2]Leo A. Verveliphen, in booklet describing peoples of the Kwango region, accompanying *Music of the Western Congo*, recordings issued by the Ethnic Folkways Library.

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[3]Willoughby, *The Soul of the Bantu*, pp. 88-89.

[301] R24 S6 D13

[4]W. M. Hoeben and I. Schapera, "Religious Beliefs and Practices," in Schapera, *The Bantu-speaking Tribes of South Africa*, p. 250.

[5]Translated from the French of Aubin, *En Haiti*, p. 212.

[6]Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, pp. 213-214.

[7]Hall and others, *Haitian Creole*, American Anthropological Association, Memoir No. 74, pp. 188-189.

[8]Simpson, "Four Vodun Communities," *Journal of American Folklore*, April-June, 1946, pp. 155-162.

[9]As translated by Courlander from Simpson's Creole text, *ibid.*, p. 156. The preceding paragraph is from p. 155.

[10]Translated by Courlander from the Creole of Simpson's text.

[11]This and the preceding paragraph are from Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 156.

[301] H24 S78 R36 M87 1525

[12]These shells, as indicated elsewhere, are part of the paraphernalia of the Vodoun priest and appear to be an inheritance from the priests of the Fa cult of Dahomey. The divining shells are usually thrown on the ground in fours, and the readings depend upon combinations of "heads and tails." The manner of throwing the shells, as well as the number used, corresponds closely with the Haitian secular gambling game *mayombe* (see Appendix 2), though the purpose is obviously different. In some private rites in Haiti, cubes rather than the customary shells are used for divining.

[13]Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

[14]*Ibid.*, p. 161.

[15]Herskovits, *op. cit.*, p. 208.

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[16]Herskovits (*ibid.*) notes that persons who die of smallpox, lightning, and certain other phenomena are not buried in coffins. Some of my informants indicated this to be their understanding also, but they said that the dead are buried without coffins for strictly economic reasons as well.

[17]Simpson, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

[18]Leyburn, *The Haitian People*, p. 156.

[19]Herskovits, *Dahomey*, I, 356.

[20]*Ibid.*, pp. 357-358.

[21]Herskovits, *Life in a Haitian Valley*, p. 214.

[22]Hall and others, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

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754 arranged the "death" will hasten to the graveyard and dig up the body; giving the proper antidote to the poison, he restores the body to activity but the mind only to semiconsciousness. In this subnormal state the victim is taken off to some remote valley where, in company with other zombis, he is made to work as a slave. Physical strength is there, but no mind with which to rebel, to ask for pay, to recognize the full extent of his sorry state."[39]

114 754 Zora Neale Hurston is the only foreigner who states that she has definitely seen a zombi. In her book, *Tell My Horse*, she describes the woman who had been a zombi and includes a picture of her.[40] The reader cannot suppress a query as to whether the supposed zombi might not have suffered simply from a special kind of insanity. Miss Hurston tells very graphically the peasant tales of "dead" persons made into zombis: of parents, husbands, and wives who have seen and clung to their recent relatives without the slightest responding sign of recognition, of men who are known to have zombis in their employ.

754 766 When a person has died a sudden death without apparent cause, a houngan will very likely be called to try to discover the malefactor, although it is not believed that he will be able to bring back to life the "dead" person. In cases where sudden death is regarded as suspicious, the survivors often see to it that the apparent corpse becomes a real one by plunging a knife into the heart or by cutting out some vital part, in order to spare the corpse the degradation of a zombi's slavery. Or families lacking the courage to mutilate a corpse will watch at the grave until it is certain that the body has begun to putrefy and real death has succeeded to the simulation. Once actual death has come, of course, the malefactor is thwarted and prevented from capitalizing on his evil work.

754 In a mental atmosphere of credulity, coincidence often makes magic seem to work. Belief gives power to the charm or rite. A person aware that a spell is cast upon him will sicken and die because he believes so firmly in the efficacy of the magic. A curse will be

[114] 39. In support of this theory of a poison which produces stupor, Seabrook, *op. cit.*, p. 335, cites the French text of the Code Pénal, Article 249, as follows: "*Est aussi qualifié attentat à la vie d'une personne, l'emploi qui sera fait contre elle de substances qui, sans donner la mort, produisent un effet léthargique plus ou moins prolongé, de quelque manière que ces substances aient administrés, quelles qu'en aient été les suites. Si par suite de cet état léthargique la personne a été inhumée, l'attentat sera qualifié assassinat.*"

40. Pp. 189–209.

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712 the hartlements far off across the tortuous mass of mountains and
[713] green valleys, admire the sheer strength of will which made His Majesty's subjects bear four hundred cannon up the steep and rocky path—not to mention thousands of cannon balls now rusting away after a century of disuse, or the powder and shot which once filled
[713] the magazines. It is said that five thousand soldiers could be housed
[703] in the fortress at once. If this is hyperbole, one hardly dare challenge it, for the whole Citadel belittles the individual man. It is likewise said that Christophe once made a battalion of soldiers march off the cliff to their death merely to demonstrate his absolute control over
• [566] them. Such stories grow up around His Black Majesty. He lies entombed in his useless but still superb fortress—and lives in the memory of the Northerners, one of whom said proudly: "We of the North have a great heritage, and you will find that we are all dominated by *une psychologie citadelliense*."

Dungeons, secret passages, royal apartments, separate rooms for each of the old Dutch, Spanish, French, and English cannon, some of them dating back to the seventeenth century—all the paraphernalia of the storybook fortress is present. From a bastion one gazes, as from an alp, for miles in any direction, and feels that La Ferrière is certainly one of the most impressive, and one of the most futile, edifices in the world. If the silent cannon had ever been fired, their balls would have rumbled harmlessly down the mountainside. The suspicion grows that Christophe achieved his architectural miracle not primarily as a defense against the French, but to make his subjects proud of what a nation of despised ex-slaves could accomplish.

344 Five miles away, at the foot of the mountain, is the village of
644 Milot, with the ruins of the palace of Sans Souci. Of yellow stone, it spreads out spaciously like a French château. Its rooms must have been magnificent. The palace is so situated that one may look out across the northern plains to the sea, or up the valleys to mountain peaks. In Sans Souci Christophe shot himself in 1820 when he knew that only *souci* would remain to him if he lived.

489 Transportation from one part of the country to another is far from
[496] easy. There are no railroads—unless one counts the short line running north a few miles from Port-au-Prince to nowhere in particular, and the equally short line coming west into Cap-Haïtien from the fields
[491] of the northern plain. Roads built by the American Marines make automobile travel between the main towns possible, if one does not